

Listening to Perspectives of Individuals with Autism: Intervention Model for Adolescents and Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders

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Introduction: The prevalence of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) has increased dramatically in the last three decades. Intervention models address the core deficits in social, communication, and repetitive and restricted behavior that constitute the diagnostic criteria. This does not capture the lived, subjective experience of the person with ASD. This often leads to mislabeling and misinterpretation of behaviors which contributes to poor postsecondary outcomes that is well documented in the literature. **Objectives:** Participants will 1) understand a conceptual model of intervention for ASD that offers an "inside out" perspective with the voice of the individual with ASD as central; 2) utilize strategies and methods to engage interests, presume intellect, see beyond surface behaviors and adapt the environment, and 3) learn how to track outcomes within the model framework. **Description:** The authors interviewed adolescents and adults with ASD to inform an "Inside Out" perspective that holds the subjective disability experience as central to intervention models. For example, adults with ASD can help therapist's decode behaviors; "I need to always make sounds and move because it makes me feel better. It is a movement and voice need...they help me calm and feel better...let me get a lot of movement breaks before sitting and concentrating". These perspectives have to inform practice, in order to impact the participation and quality of life that the person with ASD wants. **Discussion:** The lived experiences of individuals with ASD are becoming more common in the literature and must inform the practice of occupational therapy. The value of meaningful occupation and engagement of interests or "passions" are central to goals that individuals with ASD have for themselves and in line with occupational therapy's emphasis on engagement for full participation. By viewing interests solely as restricted and deficit based, the occupational therapist will miss an avenue for utilizing interests to facilitate improved outcomes for adolescents and adults. **Conclusion:** This presentation will contribute to the practice of occupational therapy by providing an innovative strength based model for intervention with individuals with ASD that demonstrates social validity from the lived experience of those on the spectrum.